

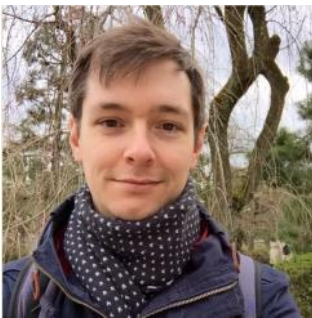


# Friends of Science in Medicine

Newsletter 19 - 20 July 2018

## WHAT'S NEW SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER?

### The power of one!



Michael Marshall

Co-founder of the [Merseyside Skeptics Society](#) and co-organiser of the [QED skeptical conference](#), Michael Marshall (aka 'Marsh') was the project leader and figurehead of the [10:23 Campaign](#), aimed at raising public awareness of the futility of homeopathy – resulting in international coverage and world-wide skeptical involvement.

With Marsh's background in marketing and communications, his skeptical activism has included testing psychic claims, trialling sports performance wristbands, interviewing proponents of alternative beliefs and [exposing the influences of public relations in journalism](#).

As Project Director of [the Good Thinking Society](#) – a registered charity in the UK – and one of the few full-time skeptical activists, Marsh has led the campaign against taxpayer-funded homeopathy on the National Health Service (NHS). In 2014, *Good Thinking* became the first UK body to understand and map taxpayer spending on homeopathic remedies, estimated at around £5m annually in the UK. Since then, after *Good Thinking* successfully pushed for public consultations on spending in the Liverpool area, the charity's successful challenge to the commissioning of homeopathy resulted in the end of expenditure on homeopathy in the North of England.



In 2016, the charity petitioned the Department of Health to add homeopathy to a list of items banned from prescription by NHS General Practitioners (GPs), which resulted last year in advice from the NHS to GPs not to prescribe it. Most significantly, Marsh's correspondence with health bodies in London led to an audit of the [Royal London Hospital for Integrative Medicine](#), which announced that, from April 2018, they would no longer be allowed to prescribe homeopathy to NHS patients. This ended an annual £3m spend on homeopathy in the capital. With Bristol, the last remaining source of funding in England, expected to follow suit in the coming months, *Good Thinking* stands on the verge of successfully ending NHS expenditure on homeopathy.

### Inside this Issue:

What's New Since Our Last Newsletter?	1	Politicians	7
FSM Executive News	2	Universities	8
Therapeutic Goods Administration	2	Complementary & Alternative Medicine—Overseas News	9
The Polarisation of Chiropractors: Science Vs Lucrative Fantasy	3	A Special Report from Professor E Ernst - Chiropractors educated to become a danger to peoples health	12
Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency	4	Recent Publications by our Friends	13



[www.scienceinmedicine.org.au](http://www.scienceinmedicine.org.au)



[scienceinmedicine@bigpond.com](mailto:scienceinmedicine@bigpond.com)



'Follow' us on Twitter @FriendsofSciMed



'Like' our Facebook Page



PO Box 631, Morayfield, QLD, 4506



## FSM EXECUTIVE NEWS

### FSM in the Media

Universal Medicine, Australia's health policy, acupuncture, the King Review and the regulation of complementary medicines are some of the topics that FSM executive were recently interviewed about.

Here is a selection of news items:

- \* [Why consumers need better protection from dodgy health care: the case of 'Universal Medicine'](#)
- \* [Science being 'thrown out the window' in Australia's health policy, experts tell MPs](#)
- \* [Disappointment for King, Friends of Science in Medicine](#)
- \* [IVF acupuncture costs twice as much, for 'no effect](#)
- \* [What was the Government's response to the King review?](#)
- \* [Ban Complementary Medicine brands from making unfounded claims: Doctors](#)
- \* [CHOICE calls out supplement claims](#)
- \* [Alternative medicine: ineffectual, or a victim of colonial arrogance?](#)

### THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

FSM endorsed the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) submission '[Consultation: Draft therapeutic goods advertising code 2018 and associated guidelines](#)' by Dr Ken Harvey et al.

The TGA gives equal validity to 'traditional' and 'scientific' evidence which is not in keeping with modern scientific understanding as documented in the National Health & Medical Research Council's levels of evidence. The submission raised concerns that 'traditional' medicines can be both ineffective and dangerous and that mass marketing of them often includes misleading and deceptive claims which takes advantage of consumer ignorance.

The submission raised concerns that the outcome of the 'Permitted Indication' policy will be that sponsors of complementary medicines will change the indications of many of their products from 'scientific' to 'traditional' to the detriment of public health, and that it is important to ensure that consumers understand the difference between these types of claim. Traditional use is certainly NOT evidence.

There was [considerable support](#) for the concept of single body taking over [the existing Therapeutic Goods Advertising Complaint System](#) to provide a single, more efficient, complaints body, with powers to apply timely and meaningful sanctions for regulatory violations.

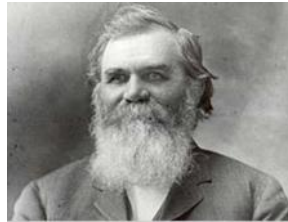
The Government then decided that the TGA would, from 1 July 2018, assume responsibility for handling all complaints about therapeutic goods advertisements directed to the public. This model would be independently reviewed after three years to determine whether or not it was the most effective solution.

FSM remains concerned about the implementation of the new [Therapeutic Goods Advertising Complaint Handling System](#). FSM endorsed [the 'TGA Complaints Handling' submission](#) by Dr Ken Harvey. This noted that the TGA's new system will be much less transparent than the [Complaint Resolution Panel system](#) which it has replaced. The submission reiterated the point made in other submissions that, unless the TGA accepts that consumer protection is an equal objective to industry assistance, and gains the will to act, a revised Code and complaint system (including increased penalties and sanctions) will have no more impact than the current dysfunctional system.



# THE POLARISATION OF CHIROPRACTORS

## Science Versus Lucrative Fantasy



Daniel D Palmer

The founder of the Chiropractic profession, Daniel Palmer was convinced that “ninety-five percent of all diseases are caused by displaced vertebrae”. He suggested that an ‘Innate intelligence’ provided a ‘guiding energy’ source that ran up and down the spinal column. If the bones of the spinal column were even mildly displaced they could interfere with this energy which was responsible for whole of body health. The displacements involved what he called ‘subluxations’. By ‘adjusting’ these displacements, health could be restored. Here was a treatment for deafness, heart disease, sexually transmitted disease and even measles!

With modern knowledge of spinal anatomy and physiology we know this theory was nonsense and should be of historical interest only. Surprisingly and regrettably there is evidence to suggest that a majority of our Chiropractors accept this fantasy as fact and use it to justify claims that they can treat diseases that have nothing to do with the spine including Autism, Asthma and developmental problems.



There is an emphasis on treating children. Adherents refer to their approach to Chiropractic as ‘Vitalism’. Of course there are many Chiropractors who are appalled with this situation and restrict their practice to care that is evidence-based. In Australia, Chiropractors are registered as health professionals and their Board, established by Government to oversee the profession, does not support the vitalistic approach.

Academic institutions such as Murdoch University in WA are telling students of chiropractic that there is no place for vitalism in modern chiropractic and the general pressure on the profession from numerous sources to reject the ‘subluxation’ approach has many chiropractors disturbed. Recently the [Australian Chiropractic College \(ACC\)](#), champions of Vitalism, decided to campaign for money to start their own chiropractic course in Adelaide.

The initiative is in the news as their application to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards authority (TEQSA) for permission to establish their course [was rejected](#). The ACC now plans to appeal the decision to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. It will be important for those of us who are championing the imperative that health care should be underpinned by credible scientific evidence of clinical effectiveness, to provide input to the tribunal urging it to uphold the TEQSA decision. The stakes are high in terms of better protecting consumers from health care fraud and the opportunity for Chiropractic to reinvent itself as a respected evidence based profession.

Any appeal to establish a chiropractic college based on scientific nonsense must be strongly opposed.







## David Gorski's Blog



Dr David Gorski

[Dr David Gorski, MD, PhD, FACS](#) is a US-based surgeon/scientist and is the managing editor of the website [Science-Based Medicine](#), a critic of alternative medicine and the anti-vaccination movement.

He is the author of the blog [Respectful Insolence](#):

[Along with the NIH budget hike comes a less welcome large hike in the budget for quackery for the NCCIH](#). FSM encourages you to visit his site.

## AUSTRALIAN HEALTH PRACTITIONERS REGULATION AGENCY

### Advertising Compliance & Enforcement Team

On 1 March, and again on 4 July, FSM met Chris Robertson, Executive Director, Strategy and Policy, and Jim O'Dempsey, the National Director, Compliance, who manages the enforcement team, to discuss the progress of FSM complaints against chiropractors, osteopaths and Chinese medicine registrants.

The enforcement team, set up in 2017, inherited over 2,400 complaints from the AHPRA Legal Team under the new approach. Compliance & Enforcement (C&E) has re-assessed all these complaints and conducted audits of advertising on websites.

Copies of individual complaints are attached to the electronic file of the registrant and sent to the registrant who is given 60 days to respond in response to the initial letter from AHPRA, which also points them to the education resources available. If a registrant fails to modify their advertising, the enforcement team issues a show cause notice.

The data to date confirm that of the sample audited (95% confidence that sample reflects all 2400 complaints), ~50% become compliant in response to the initial letter from AHPRA while the remaining 50% become compliant when asked to show cause why their right to advertise should not be restricted. No advertising conditions have yet been imposed. The enforcement team also has available to it expert researchers who assess the available evidence if a registrant submits that their advertising is supported by an appropriate level of evidence.

A checklist for acceptable evidence is currently being developed.

C&E are currently focussing on complaints relating to Chinese medicine registrants' websites. Work is also being progressed to shift from a complaint-driven enforcement strategy to a proactive all-of-profession strategy through a pilot of random audits of a representative sample of all registrants in two professions.

C&E also mentioned that a statement that a registrant offers a pseudoscience-based service could in some circumstances be a breach of the advertising requirements. A statement such as "xxx uses the Webster technique to turn a breech baby" is an example of false advertising.

### Chinese Medicine Board

FSM submitted an additional 150 complaints about pulse and tongue diagnosis. These included false and misleading claims for the efficacy and safety of acupuncture and of TCM for serious and self-limiting conditions. Some websites targeted the unborn and new families.

The [Cochrane Collaboration](#) is considered the 'Gold Standard' for evidence-based medicine. [More than 60 Cochrane reviews](#) have failed to find robust evidence for clinically significant outcomes for acupuncture for any disease or disorders.

Cochrane systematic reviews of [Chinese herbal medicine are inconclusive](#).



## Osteopathy Board

FSM met with the Osteopathy Board regarding their failure to reject [‘Osteopathy of the Cranial Field’](#) and [‘Visceral Manipulation’](#) in their advertising guidelines and about their claims that additional training in unspecified ‘Paediatrics’ courses qualifies them to provide services to babies and children. Their response was that whether these interventions worked or not was “a difference of opinion”.



## Nursing and Midwifery Board/Medical Board of Australia

While FSM acknowledges the efforts by the Chiropractic Board of Australia, the Osteopathy Board of Australia and the [Chinese Medicine Board of Australia](#) to require that advertising be based on credible evidence, our requests to limit *the scope of practice* of registrants to match their advertising has been rejected.



Our main concern is for the health and safety of the unborn, for pregnant women and for young children where registrants, while they cannot *advertise* false and misleading claims for these vulnerable patients, can still practise them.

FSM wrote jointly to the Chairs of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia and the Medical Board of Australia for their support in asking AHPRA to limit the scope of practice of alternative medicine practitioners to musculoskeletal conditions for pregnant women and to prohibit the treatment of babies.

## OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

### Australian College of Midwives



Concerned that non-evidence based alternative interventions creeping into women’s health and, in particular, into midwifery, FSM wrote to the Australian College of Midwives (ACM) about the teaching, promotion and endorsement of reflexology and acupressure. Two courses were identified:

[Women, midwives and reflexology: Making a difference](#) - endorsed by the ACM for 62 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points; and [Acupressure for Midwives and Doulas](#) – endorsed by the ACM for 17.5 CPD points and run by Chinese Medicine Board registrants.

These courses made a wide range of claims for symptoms commonly experienced by women throughout pregnancy; both refer to fetuses in the breech position and ‘overdue’ pregnancies.

Reflexology, included in the National Health & Medical Research Council review into a range of natural therapies, was [not found to be effective for any disease or disorder](#). Acupuncture is not recommended for pregnancy disorders.

With a range of non-evidence based alternative interventions are creeping into women’s health and, in particular, into midwifery, FSM asked whether or not the College is evidence-based and whether or not it promotes, endorses and accept unproven alternative interventions. We requested that the College issue a strongly worded statement to their members and that they avoid endorsing non-evidence based therapies.



## Primary Health Care Advisory Group

TENS, acupuncture and repeated manipulation and other methods do not change outcomes in patients with chronic pain. In 1999, the cost of these ineffective approaches was estimated to be ["in excess of \\$10bn per annum"](#).

FSM strongly support efforts to remove low value (and no value) treatments from the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS). However, millions of dollars continue to be wasted on acupuncture treatments for chronic diseases.



Dr Steve Hambleton

From 2012 to 2017, [over \\$120 million was spent on acupuncture](#) for adults, and \$1.23 million on acupuncture for children younger than 15.

FSM wrote to Dr Steve Hambleton, Chair, asking that his committee look at having item numbers 173,193,197 and 199 removed from the MBS. Dr Hambleton passed our letter to the MBS Review Secretariat.

## Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association



Prof Edzard Ernst

In 2017, the Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association (AACMA) published ['The Acupuncture Evidence Project: A Comparative Literature Review'](#), which falsely claimed that acupuncture was clinically proven to be effective for a wide range of diseases and disorders. Professor Edzard Ernst, a world authority on complementary and alternative medicine, analysed the review and found that it was no more than ["an orgy in wishful thinking"](#).

FSM wrote to the AACMA about the review. They denied that acupuncture lacked robust evidence. In their response, they made false claims about Ernst, which he challenged. In February, Ernst received a full retraction ["AACMA retracts any suggestion that implied any undeclared financial links you may or may not have with pharmaceutical companies either now or in the past"](#).



FSM again wrote to the AACMA, with our own analysis of their 'evidence'. FSM pointed out that the AACMA review provided no evidence to support any clinically significant advantages for acupuncture when compared with established therapies and that none of the studies quoted met the standards demanded by the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia (CMBA) itself for advertising. Their review also failed in its stated purpose of analysing the literature to see if there were indeed high quality 'level one' evidence to support acupuncture.



The review makes claims for the effectiveness of acupuncture in 109 conditions which would see registrants breaking the National Law if they made therapeutic claims for them.

We asked the AACMA to make this clear to its members, so many of whom continue to use the now deleted recommendations from the World Health Organisation, despite instructions from the CMBA not to do so.



## POLITICIANS

### The Hon Greg Hunt MP, Minister for Health



FSM wrote to the Minister, congratulating him for implementing the recommendations in the 2015 report of the Chief Medical Officer on the Review of Natural Therapies, a report underpinned by a review of the scientific literature by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

### The Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP Member for Fenner, Australian Capital Territory



One of FSM's frustrations is the lack of support for prioritising evidence-based practice at government levels, both state and federal.

Minister Leigh, formerly a professor of Economics at the Australian National University, has recently published '[Randomistas](#)', in which book he suggests that this situation might be slowly changing.

FSM asserts that groups such as chiropractors, homeopaths and Chinese medicine practitioners will not change their activities without government insistence. It has been difficult to achieve a demand from government for greater evidence of benefit to receive Medical Benefit Schedule (MBS) support.

Some MPs appear either to use or endorse these interventions.

As there is no clear symptomatic benefit for acupuncture on children, FSM's Paediatric Facilitator, Dr John McLennan, wrote to Minister Leigh about the removal of acupuncture from Medicare benefits on referral by a GP, as they are a significant drain on the public purse. No rebate should be available for any consultation at which acupuncture is performed by a GP.



## SPOTTERS WANTED!

Want to be a 'Public Health Activist'? The 'Whack-a-mole (WAM)' project needs your help! Developing university students in critical thinking, research and in understanding our regulatory system, this project needs more advertisements that may be making questionable therapeutic claims.

**Contact us**



If you see any therapeutic goods or services making outrageous claims - don't get angry, get emailing! Send the links or copies of advertisements (and where and when they were published) to our CEO, at [scienceinmedicine@bigpond.com](mailto:scienceinmedicine@bigpond.com).

## 'WIKILEAKS' FOR DODGY PHARMACY PRACTICES



Attention pharmacy worker! To gather stories and data about how Complementary Medicines are being managed in Australian pharmacies today, FSM Pharmacy Facilitator, Ian Carr, has set up the email address [pharmacy.CAM.leaks@gmail.com](mailto:pharmacy.CAM.leaks@gmail.com), where you can share your stories.





## UNIVERSITIES

### University of New South Wales

The [Mindd Foundation](#) claims to be able to treat “[a range of illness including Autism, ADHD, allergies, asthma, chronic infections, irritable bowel syndrome, learning delay and much more](#)” with natural therapies. The foundation also endorses the now-discredited link between vaccines and autism. Assessed by the [Chiropractors Association of Australia for 18 hours Continuing Development Points \(CPD\)](#), the three day Mindd Foundation conference was held at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) in 2017 and was again scheduled for May 2018 [at the UNSW](#). The presentation of this misinformation at the UNSW gives this foundation undeserved credibility.

The course includes “nutritional and environmental” [medical doctors](#), naturopaths and other alternative practitioners who “[cover natural treatments](#) for allergies, asthma, ADHD, aggression, anxiety, autism, chronic fatigue, depression and a range of brain-immuno-gut conditions in kids and adults. Key modalities covered include; nutrient therapy, herbal medicine, energy medicine, neurofeedback, hydrotherapy, cryotherapy, nutritional psychiatry, behavioural therapies, holistic dentistry, auditory & visual processing, sensory integration, functional neurology, musculo-skeletal care”.

FSM wrote to the UNSW asking them to cancel the event. While the May conference was allowed to go ahead, all future bookings were cancelled. UNSW is also investigating ways to vet bookers in more detail, “so these types of events in time will cease at UNSW”.

### University of Sydney

FSM wrote to the Director, Centre for Veterinary Education (CVE), questioning their inclusion of advertising for the ‘[Australian College of Veterinary Acupuncture 2018 IVAS course](#)’. His response was that the “CVE is not hosting the course, therefore it was not included in the CVE Handbook nor on the CVE website”, but that they include the advertising to “promote the course to the wider veterinary community”.

### Murdoch University

Non-evidence-based beliefs are common among Australian chiropractic students.

Conducted in 2016, a Murdoch University cross-sectional study of chiropractic students showed that more than a quarter of the 830 students at [Macquarie and Murdoch universities](#) think that spinal adjustments can prevent or alter the course of organic diseases.

The students were asked if they believed that chiropractic spinal adjustments could prevent or help a range of illnesses. Up to 40% thought that adjustments could help prevent disease, up to 60% thought that spinal adjustments could help the immune system and up to 65% said that they could help the health of babies. The study found that 70% of the students believed that, in their practice, they would be able to offer advice on preventing diabetes and 76% on preventing cardiovascular disease.

Chiropractors often base their treatments on ‘philosophy’, rather than evidence. Calls to restrict the scope of practice of chiropractors in line with their advertising have been rejected because AHPRA stated, “our prime responsibility is to stimulate innovation and diversity within the professions to constantly improve care” and included such statements as “The Board and AHPRA note that limiting chiropractors’ scope of practice in relation to treatment of babies and children would have potential impacts on workforce flexibility and access to health services for some consumers and may have flow on implications for other registered professions who provide manual therapy to children and infants”.





## COMPLEMENTARY & ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

### OVERSEAS NEWS

#### China: Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM)

A Chinese doctor was [detained for 3 months](#) for traditional medicine 'poison' remarks: Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is an enormous industry in China, with a total value in excess of \$130 billion in 2016. The case is the latest in a series of skirmishes in China between proponents of TCM (which lacks clinical trials proving efficacy) and doctors advocating for evidence-based, peer-reviewed medicine.



Dr Tan Qindong had been accused of damaging the reputation of a health liquor maker. After a public outcry he was eventually released by order of Inner Mongolia's top prosecuting authority. "It was right to write this essay," Dr. Tan [said in a video interview](#) produced by Beijing News. "You must speak the truth a couple of times in your life-time, and especially if a doctor doesn't speak the truth and lets these ads about miracle cures run rife, they'll hurt even more people."

The company [has now suspended advertising](#) for this over-the-counter TCM product. Promoted as a cure for a wide range of illnesses, including joint pain and coronary artery disease, it was advertised as being "suitable for everyone".

#### Hungary: embracing Traditional Chinese Medicine

On 16 April, [Hungary's University of Szeged](#) signed an agreement with the Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine in Xianyang, China, to bring Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) researchers, medical experts and lecturers to Hungary. The University of Pécs has had a similar arrangement since 2015. In 2017, the Hungarian government announced plans to allocate about €4.5 million (\$5.3 million) to build a new institute with a whole floor dedicated to TCM at Semmelweis University, one of the most prestigious medical schools in Hungary. The government says it wants to bridge the gap between western medicine and eastern alternatives to improve Hungarian health care, and also strengthen the economic, political, and cultural ties between Hungary and China.

[Zsolt Boldogkői, head of the Department of Medical Biology at the University of Szeged, lamented, in an open letter to](#) the president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, TCM's growing influence in the country. "Acupuncture is based on pseudoscience and a technique unsuitable for medical purposes ... teaching it on a university level is seriously damaging the reputation of science and fact-based medical treatments," he wrote.

#### Poland: Dietary supplements targeted by the Supreme Medical Council

Polish law does not require dietary supplements to be tested before they are put up for sale. In 2017, producers marketed 15,000 new dietary supplements; more than in the previous nine years combined.



Concerned that no more than 0.5 percent of such products are medically tested by the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate, Poland's Supreme Medical Council, the authority which represents the country's physicians and dental practitioners, has called for [more stringent laws on dietary supplements](#). More than 11 percent of people consuming dietary supplements experience unwanted side effects .



## France: Open letter published by doctors

Concerned that their colleagues are promoting alternative medicine, including homeopathy, acupuncture and the skin rejuvenation treatment 'mesotherapy', [a group of doctors](#) called for their ruling body to ban doctors using their professional titles when offering alternative medicine.



More than 100 doctors and health professionals wrote an open letter, [published in Le Figaro](#), protesting against the use of alternative medicines by medical doctors and asking that they should be banned from promoting scientifically unproven treatments. The letter cited a 2017 ruling by the Euro-pean Science Advisory Council that there was "no robust, reproducible evidence that homeopathic products work" beyond being placebos and that homeopathy "can actually be harmful" by delaying evidence-based treatment. The letter also asked the government to stop reimbursing such treatments until they had been scientifically proven to be effective.

[The French Health Minister](#) recently acknowledged that homeopathy is a placebo therapy. However, the Minister also claimed that, because it does no harm, and because it can prevent harm from conventional medicine, the government should continue to reimburse it.

## India: National Medical Commission Bill 2017

The National Medical Council (NMC) Bill is a misguided attempt to address the shortage of rural doctors throughout India. The Bill seeks to replace the Medical Council of India with an unelected commission to be appointed by the Centre.



In January, concerned about this ["anti-people and anti-patient"](#) Bill, the Indian Medical Association called for a 12-hour shutdown of all private hospitals in the country. The Bill included a 'bridge course' for AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Homeopathy) practitioners, which would have permitted these alternative practitioners to practise as medical doctors. While the Government has approved some amendments, including the removal of the provision of the bridge course, this Bill, as it stands, will still give ["licence to quackery and result in a public healthcare disaster"](#).

## US: Guidance on homeopathic product labelling

The Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) released its [Draft Guidance on Drug Products Labeled as Homeopathic](#). The Draft Guidance summarises the FDA's current enforcement perspective on homeopathic products and provides a list of its enforcement priorities. Homeopathic goods "are subject to the same regulatory requirements as other drugs; nothing in the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act exempts homeopathic drugs from any of the requirements related to adulteration, labelling, misbranding, or approval."



The Draft Guidance recognises that the agency lacks the resources to bring enforcement actions against all violators in the expanding homeopathy industry and therefore describes a risk-based approach to enforcement.



## US: Herbal supplement targeted by Food & Drugs Administration

Between 2011 and 2017, according to the Food & Drugs Administration (FDA), 44 deaths in the US have been [tied to the health supplement](#), 'kratom'. There has also been a rise in the number of calls to poison centres about it. Used for pain relief and to ease the symptoms of opioid withdrawal, the supplement has opioid properties. It is derived from the leaves of a south-east Asian tree, a member of the coffee family. Illegal in 7 states, the FDA has, for years, been seizing shipments and destroying them, including 90,000 bottles found in 2016 at one factory. [Due to a salmonella threat](#), the CDC is now urging Americans to avoid it.



## Spain: Call to action to counter the growing popularity of alternative medicine treatments



The latest [Sociological Investigation Center \(CIS\) survey](#) carried out in Spain included questions on alternative medicine for the first time. Despite the lack of concrete proof that they can be effective, Spanish society appears hazy on [what distinguishes conventional medicine from the pseudo variety](#). Experts warn of serious consequences if authorities do not take action to counter the growing popularity of treatments like reiki and homeopathy.

The latest [Sociological Investigation Center \(CIS\) survey](#) carried out in Spain included questions on alternative medicine for the first time. Despite the lack of concrete proof that they can be effective, Spanish society appears hazy on [what distinguishes conventional medicine from the pseudo variety](#). Experts warn of serious consequences if authorities do not take action to counter the growing popularity of treatments like reiki and homeopathy.

## Slovenia: Concerns about a new alternative medicine bill

The Slovenian Health Ministry is drawing up a bill on complementary, traditional and alternative forms of diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation, which will open the door to "hybrid medicine". To prevent abuse of patient's distress and trust and those who treat them from profiting from the sale of 'smart water', the Slovenian Medical Academy called for a clear legislative distinction between conventional medicine and alternative 'healing' practices as they believe it is ["unacceptable for doctors"](#) to practice both. The medical colleges in Ljubljana and Maribor back the Academy's call for legislative separation.



## Ireland: Advertising Standards Authority uphold a complaint



In 2016, an [Irish restaurateur and a nutritional therapist](#) released a ketogenic cookbook, claiming the diet could treat chronic disease, including cancer. Their claims were condemned by scientists and dieticians, but this was no impediment to the book's becoming a best-seller. The Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute and Irish Cancer Society filed a complaint with the Advertising Standards Authority about claims on Daly's website, including one offering a \$497 web-course on ketogenic diets for cancer. These complaints were upheld by the ASA.





## A SPECIAL REPORT FROM EDZARD ERNST

### [Chiropractors are being educated to become a danger to the people's health](#)

We are told over and over again that chiropractors are fast giving up the vitalistic and obsolete concepts of their founding fathers, but are these assertions true? There are good reasons to be sceptical. Take a recent paper, for instance.



The objective of [the survey](#) was to investigate the proportion of Australian chiropractic students who held non-evidence-based beliefs in the first year of study and to determine the extent to which these beliefs might be involved in non-musculoskeletal health conditions. Students from two Australian chiropractic programs were invited to answer a questionnaire on how often, in their future practices, they would give advice on five common illnesses, as well as to provide their opinion on whether chiropractic spinal adjustments could prevent or help seven illnesses.

The response rate was 53%. Students were highly likely to offer advice on a range of non-musculoskeletal conditions. The proportions were lowest in the first year and highest in the final year. For instance, 64% of students in year 4/5 believed that spinal adjustments improve the health of infants. Also, high numbers of students held non-evidence-based beliefs about 'chiropractic spinal adjustments', beliefs which tended to occur in gradually proportions in sequential years, except for the 5th and final year, when a reversal of the pattern occurred.

The authors concluded that new strategies were required for chiropractic educators if they were to produce graduates who understand and deliver evidence-based health care and be able to participate in the mainstream health care system.

This is an interesting survey, but I think its conclusion is wrong!

I would argue that educators do not require 'new strategies'; they simply need to take their duty of educating students seriously. Educating in this context does not mean brain-washing; it means teaching facts and evidence-based practice. And this is where any concept of true education would run into problems: it would teach students that chiropractic is built on sand..

Conclusions need to be based on the data ascertained. Therefore, the most fitting conclusion of the study, in my view, is that chiropractic students are currently being educated such that, once let loose on an unsuspecting – and often all too gullible – public, they will be a menace and a serious danger to the public's health.

You might say that this survey is from Australia and that its findings do not necessarily apply to other countries. Correct! However, I very much fear that the situation is similar elsewhere – or perhaps even worse. My fear does not come out of thin air: it is based on things we have discussed before, as in these three posts:

- \* [Chiropractic education seems to be a form of religious indoctrination](#)
- \* [What are the competencies of a 'certified paediatric doctor of chiropractic'?](#)
- \* [Educating chiros](#)

But I would be more than willing to change my mind – provided someone can show me good evidence to the contrary.



## RECENT RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS BY FRIENDS

Nightlife with Philip Clark, Sarah Macdonald

- \* Dr Ken Harvey [Do vitamins and supplements really work?](#)

'The Bitter Pill' - Australasian Science

- \* Rosemary Stanton [Diet Gurus Ignore the Weight of Evidence in Guidelines](#)
- \* Tanya Stephens [What Is the Point of Veterinary Acupuncture?](#)
- \* Ian Haines [Why No Man Should Take a PSA Blood Test for Early Stage Prostate Cancer Without Reading This](#)

Edzard Ernst

- \* [Live blood analysis, another SCAM to avoid](#)
- \* [Vaccine scepticism, alternative medicine and slipping standards](#)
- \* [Malpractice of chiropractors – just the tip of the iceberg?](#)
- \* [Critical thinking, the ability to differentiate the useful from the worthless](#)
- \* [Why do insurance companies pay for ineffective treatments?](#)

Australian Skeptics

- \* [Govt rejects recommendation on homeo products in pharmacies](#)

Forbes

- Steven Salzberg [Acupuncture for fertility? Really?](#)
- Steven Salzberg [Another anti-vax paper bites the dust. But not quickly enough.](#)

Science-based Medicine

- \* [Certification in chiropractic techniques: legitimate care or tomfoolery?](#)
- \* [So-Called Alternative Medicine](#)
- \* [Science-based medicine versus other ways of knowing](#)
- \* [Chiropractic Pediatrics: “delayed referral, misdiagnosis, adverse events and ineffective treatments”](#)
- \* [Fake news about fish oil](#)

Respectful Insolence (David Gorski)

- \* [As I predicted, the exploitation of desperate patients using right-to-try begins](#)

HealthWatch Newsletter (UK)

- \* [Issue 106, Autumn 2017](#)
- \* [Issue 107, Spring 2018](#)

Good Thinking Society (UK)

- \* [British Homeopathic Association’s legal challenge to NHS England fails](#)

Frank Van Der Kooy

- \* [Acupuncture does not improve IVF success! Surprisingly, it might actually be decreasing the success rate! \(just don’t tell anyone\)](#)
- \* [Dog saliva as medicine for.....’growling’? Homeopathy – the perfect script for a Black Comedy.](#)



---

We would like to ask our supporters  
to alert their friends to the important role being played by

### **Friends of Science in Medicine**

and to encourage them to join as a Friend or add their support in other ways.  
You can contact us and new supporters can join us at no cost at:

**Email**

[scienceinmedicine@bigpond.com](mailto:scienceinmedicine@bigpond.com)

**Web**

<http://www.scienceinmedicine.org.au>

or follow us on Facebook or Twitter

**Facebook**

<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfScienceInMedicine/>

**Twitter**

<https://twitter.com/friendsofscimed>

---